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ABSTRACT

The history of James Burrill Angell as the president of the University of Michigan presents a case study of the role of 19th century liberal Protestant university builders in the eventual marginalization of religion from the mainstream of U.S. higher education. Angell's tenure, which began in 1871, encompassed the period in which the modern university became secular. The University of Michigan appears to have been a leader in the secularization process, and the study of Angell's role is illustrative of the changes taking place. Angell's own devout and personal adherence to the dominant Protestant culture of his day, liberalism, gave him great faith in the goodness of society, and especially in the goodness of the faculty. His unwavering belief in the desire and ability of Christian faculty to infuse their disciplines with their Christian faith did not foresee the eventual transition to a faculty whose personal faith systems were not orthodox or urgent. To this end, his agency in secularization was a combination of intentionality, inadvertence, and inevitability. His original intention of making the university representative of a Christianity more "true" than the traditional belief system through liberal practices, was succeeded by a period of the inadvertent allowance of secular ideas. The eventual dominance of the secular troubled Angell later in life as he called again for a strong, liberal, Christian influence in the university. (Contains 48 endnotes.) (SLD)

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Intentional, Inadvertent, or Inevitable?

James Burrill Angell and Secularization at the University of Michigan

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''Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.''

Article Three, Northwest Ordinance,
United States Congressional Act, 1787

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drawing even with counterpart private institutions in the East within its first quarter century. Angell's attempt to fuse nonsectarian protestant principles with state education in Michigan became a model for developing state universities in the West.

Despite this attempt, Angell's tenure encompassed the period during which the modern university, by most accounts, became fully secular.[3] Except for a basic disagreement in the interpretation of what is meant by the term "secular," there is little evidence that the University of Michigan departed from this national trend.[4] Indeed, the evidence indicates that as in other arenas, Michigan was a leader in the secularization process.

Little or nothing has been written about James Burrill Angell in terms of his role in this increasingly disputed phenomenon in higher education, the process by which nonsectarian liberal-Protestant university builders altered the old-time college into a research-oriented, value-free university .[5] What has been written tends to either write him off as irrelevant in this process and thereby uninteresting, or to place him in a block of his peer university leaders, overlooking his unique role as a bridge between old and new, a superlative example of a leader with ideas pulling in decidedly competing directions.[6]

Angell was not a member of the old guard, those who were defenders of the classical curriculum and the unquestioned role of revealed religion in the curricular life of institutions of higher learning. But he was sympathetic, having been educated at

Francis Wayland's Brown of the 1840s. And while he is easily identifiable as a leading liberal Protestant, he was also not exclusively an advocate of the liberal Protestant ideology which unseated a traditionally religious dominant establishment. His views on the importance of Protestant Christianity, especially in the lives of his faculty as it pertained to their influence on students, were too identifiable as traditional to place him as firmly within liberal Protestantism as, say, a Charles Eliot at Harvard. And he is clearly not a complete progressive reformer, as evidenced by his strong concern in his later years for the loss of a unifying reliance on religion and its fruit as the bedrock of the university's purpose.

Angell represents his time perhaps as well as any of his contemporaries, embodying developments that were characteristic of the period. Beginning with eager changes wrought at the hands of robust, reform-minded young university presidents, his era evolved into years of observing the rise of specialization, professionalization, and value-free science and the resultant chipping away at a unity of knowledge Angell assumed under a divine rubric. Angell made efforts to stem the tide of science superseding religion, but only in conciliatory ways that demonstrated his desire to wed the two rather than see a victory of one over the other. Toward the end of his career, Angell made numerous indications that he was concerned for the future of the state of affairs in higher education as they related to the place of religion within the academy.[7] The development of Angell's thought process and his multi-faceted allegiance makes him a key

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source of information regarding the role of individuals in the process by which religious influence underwent such a profound transformation during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Was Angell aware of his role in the marginalization of religion from the heart of the university? Was the process by which religion moved to the periphery and out of the curriculum at Michigan actually part of his grand, liberal Protestant plan? Or were the consequences of his marginalizing policies largely inadvertent repercussions of a benign ''methodological secularization?''[8] Did Angell and his contemporaries fail in their attempts to reconcile religion and science? To the extent that he had any influence at all, was Angell's participation in the secularization of higher education intentional, inadvertent or inevitable?

President Angell was fond of quoting the third article of the Northwest Ordinance (1787), one of four seminal congressional documents. The article stated, ''Religion, morality, and knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind, schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged.'' This passage served as the guiding principle in the post-revolutionary establishment of public education in the developing frontier states such as Michigan. Employing the three hallmarks of the passage, religion, morality, and knowledge, this essay analyzes Angell's agency in the secularization process at the University of Michigan. The essay will examine three events during the Angell presidency; his 1871 inaugural pronouncement that the University of Michigan, as well as the State of

Michigan, were ''Christian'' institutions; the abolition of compulsory chapel within a year of his arrival; and the establishment of the Graduate School in 1891. These events will serve as guideposts in the analysis of his intentionality and influence.

Agency in Secularization: Exploring Alternate Views

Historians of education typically regard the nineteenth century in American higher education as a period of momentous religious and philosophical transition.[9] While the same could undoubtedly be said of most centuries, the difference between the nineteenth and other centuries is the degree to which the entire higher education enterprise was essentially reinvented from old-time college to modern university. To summarize this shift broadly, the old time college was fundamentally a religious academic institution and the modern university became an increasingly ''value-free" academic institution. Modernism and its adherents within the university effectively drove a wedge between the religious values of the college ideal and the research emphases of the ''true'' universities.

In recent years, traditional explanations for this profound shift, often referred to as ''secularization,''[10] have been increasingly contested, especially in an emerging revisionist literature unwilling to accept such simplistic explanations as those given by noted conventional historians of higher education.[11] Traditional historians pointed out that many national and global events such as the European Enlightenment,

American independence, population expansion, urbanization, industrialization, the Civil War, the abolition of slavery, and particularly the rise of empirical science stood out as key precursors to the philosophical changes in higher education taking place between 1860 and 1900. Society was simply becoming more complex and diverse. For traditional historians, the process of secularization resulting from inevitable historical forces was a foregone conclusion. Along with diversity and growth of such magnitude, secularization was plainly inevitable. Ringenberg, however, points out that although it may be logical to parallel secularization within the academy with societal secularization, the two have not been exactly parallel. While ante-bellum higher education was more religious than society in general, twentieth century secularized higher education is generally more secular than society.[12]

Revisionists such as George Marsden and Julie Reuben have primarily disagreed with traditionalist interpretations on the source and nature of the shift, rather than arguing against the historicity of the drift toward secularization. Where traditional historians have de-personalized the historical process, crediting large shifts such as secularization to impersonal and inevitable forces, recent scholarship has more carefully pointed out that there were, indeed, historical actors involved, and these were primarily Protestant societal leaders of varying stripes.

The irony of the suggestion that religious academic leaders were largely responsible, however inadvertently, for the

marginalization of religion from the academy is of principle interest in this essay. Marsden suggests that it was a ''methodological secularization'' that opened the door to a more ''ideological secularization.'' He describes methodological secularization by using the example of pious Christian scientists who, upon entering the laboratory, were expected to ''leave their religious beliefs at the door, even if they had prayed God to bless their work and came from their discoveries praising God for his work.''[13] The social sciences were not immune to this secularization, indeed, some have argued that secularization was more aggressively courted in social sciences than in hard sciences.[14]

In contrast to the traditional ''inevitability'' theory of secularization, Marsden makes the case that secularization occurred in large part at the hands of devout believers in a new, more liberal Protestantism, rather than as the loss of any war with science on the part of religion. In his view science and religion, especially the religion of the liberal Protestants, were closely intertwined, with pious university builders relying on empirical science to lead society to a greater understanding of God's truth. As the ideals of liberal Protestantism advanced, the use of the term ''Christian'' to describe institutions and their leaders came to be more a ceremonial than an actual reference to specific belief systems. Marsden offers a wry comparison between traditional religious beliefs in this new paradigm and ''grandparents in an upwardly mobile family, tolerated, and sometimes respected because of their service in

the past, even given some nice quarters of their own and celebrated on holidays, but otherwise expected either to be supportive or to stay out of the way and not say anything embarrassing.''[15]

Marsden asserts that by leaving religious viewpoints out of the social and hard sciences' experimental venues, academic leaders such as Angell were inadvertently conceding that religion had no role to play in education.[16] Angell's rhetoric, however, which was firmly devoted to the notion of piety and the important role of Christianity in higher education, implies a clear vision in the other direction.[17] Is this necessarily a contradiction? In contrast to the idea that ''materialistic atheists'' came in and took over the enterprise, Marsden claims that the process of secularization was more likely a result of poor foresight on the part of religious academic leaders such as Angell. By encouraging methodological secularization, Angell may have unintentionally ushered religious influence out the back door while welcoming a more ''value-free science" in through the front, all in a pious and devoutly Christian spirit.[18]

It is also possible that liberal Protestant university builders such as Angell deliberately reshaped institutions to fit into a more liberal Christianity less focused on theological distinctions and more interested in good deeds, positive thinking, and piety. Since this change might appear to a more traditional conservative believer to be a form of secularization, Angell's actions may actually be interpreted by some as

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strengthening Christianity on campus and by others as dreadfully weakening it, depending on the vantage point of the observer.

Julie Reuben counters Marsden's argument by asserting that rather than poor foresight passively allowing secularization to happen, it was the *inability* on the part of the liberal Protestant university builders to reconcile religion with modern science that forced the rise of secularization. She makes the claim that Angell and his contemporaries knew full well what was happening, but were powerless to stop or change it. Or, more specifically, they were unable to modernize religion as they hoped to fit into the modern university alongside empirical science.[19] She remains unconvinced of the effect that Marsden and others claim that liberal Protestants such as Angell actually had on the secularization process, exclusive of science, arguing that science and liberal Protestantism were inextricably linked. While both Marsden and Reuben maintain that science and religion were closely connected, Reuben argues that they were so indivisible that it is impossible to distinguish for any individual university builder where his Protestantism ended and his science began. This inability to distinguish makes proving religious agency in secularization near impossible.[20] This may well be the case, unless one can provide evidence that the liberal Protestants of the day held their views of science within their Protestant umbrella, or vice versa.

Understanding this liberal Protestantism is vital to gaining a more nuanced understanding of how Angell may have influenced the religious spirit at Michigan. A more thorough treatment of

the liberal Protestantism of the late nineteenth century will follow a brief section introducing President Angell and placing him in his historical context.

James Burrill Angell

The third president of the University of Michigan was a native of Rhode Island, a product of seven generations of New Englanders dating back to a relative arriving in the colony with Rhode Island founder Roger Williams. His family was middle class, and he became well educated, culminating in his graduation from Brown with highest honors in 1849 at age twenty. After brief stints travelling in the American South and in Europe, as well as serving as a civil engineer in Boston, Angell was offered his choice of two professorships at Brown, in civil engineering or modern languages. He chose modern languages, and after another year abroad in Europe, he returned to Brown to teach for seven years. In 1860, he became the editor of the Providence Daily Journal, a Republican newspaper. In 1866, he was offered the presidency of the struggling University of Vermont, which he accepted. Three years later the University of Michigan invited him to become their president. Initially declining the offer, Angell was finally persuaded to come in 1871, beginning what was to become the longest single presidency in Michigan's history.[21]

In order to better understand his presidency, and especially his rhetoric and policies, it is important to place him in a religious and philosophical context. As the son of a tavern owner, he had numerous childhood opportunities to meet and listen

to members of both the lower and the upper classes. In addition, a summer spent in hard labor in the farm fields of a relative taught him the cost of an hour's work by the laborer.[22] His preparatory training was in part under Henry Simmons Frieze, who went on to teach Latin and serve as President *pro tem* at Michigan immediately prior to Angell's arrival in 1871. Angell's friendship with Frieze would prove instrumental to his being asked to be president as well as to his later success in the position. Angell also studied under Francis Wayland, one of the best known educational reformers of the nineteenth century. Wayland was president of Brown University, and later author of the nation's most popular texts in political economy, and moral philosophy.[23] Wayland was a contemporary of Michigan's first president, Henry P. Tappan, also a profound influence on American higher education. Tappan advocated the development of the university out of the old college system, arguing that up to the 1850's, there were no universities in the United States, only colleges. Both Wayland and Tappan had been affected by study at Union College, under sixty-two year president Eliphalet Nott, another collegiate reformer, and both were adamant about seeing higher education in America become more practical and more like the German research ideal.[24] Angell's early association with the ideas of both of these influential men is not insignificant in comprehending his later policies and practices as president.

Wayland played a role in shaping Angell's religious identity as well. He wrote in his *Reminiscences* of Wayland's personal faith, and his ability to spark deep thoughts in the students at

Brown by "look[ing] into their faces with those piercing eyes and [speaking] with fatherly tenderness of the divine love." In Angell's reflections of his relationship to Wayland, we see early indications of his development as a liberal Protestant concerned with the "divine love," rather than the "extravagances and excitements of so-called revivals in the country towns and villages, which apparently appealed to ignorant and emotional persons rather than to the rational and intelligent." [25] The roots of liberal Protestantism were already sown in men like Frieze, Wayland and Tappan; Angell the astute learner apprehended the liberal Protestant culture from his formative interactions with these progressive educators. A more thorough understanding of Angell's agency in the secularization process first requires a more careful insight into the nature of the dominant liberal Protestantism of the late nineteenth century.

Liberal Protestantism

The story of the rise of liberal Protestantism is beyond the scope of this essay, but a brief attempt to place it in a religious context for the mid- to late nineteenth century is in order. Essentially, the liberal Protestantism that seems to characterize Angell and many of his contemporaries rose out of an attempt on the part of many societal leaders such as Angell to preserve the high ideals of religion while eschewing the strict and complicated theological quandaries and disputes of traditional Christianity. We might classify it as a sort of Christianity "lite." Liberal Protestants stood in the

expansive middle ground between agnostics, atheists, and secularists on the one hand, and the more traditional, conservative Protestants holding to an inspired, authoritative Scripture, the atoning work of Christ, and the importance of religious tradition on the other.

One way of interpreting their motivations for watering down the older, more traditional Christianity is to suggest that it was to retain some sense of interest in religion on the part of the general public. Grasping the complexities of theology without an extensive, largely unattainable education was an improbability for the common religious person in the nineteenth century. Another interpretation might be that in order to protect the faith from the rise of science, an element of religion had to be placed in the untouchable spiritual realm, where empirical science and its harsh demands could not expose it as fraudulent and indefensible. On a not-so-level playing field, where empirical science determined the rules of the game, traditional religion had little chance for survival. Placing elements of it in the presumably safe territory of the spiritual realm was one way of ensuring that it would not be wholly lost.

With this general depiction of liberal Protestantism, locating Angell within it is fairly safe. His public rhetoric is heavily laced with language easily identifiable with the more moderate notions of liberal Protestantism, and is at times critical of more traditional sentiments restricting the ideals of progressive reformers. In an address given to the Vermont Congregational Convention in June, 1870, he said, ''Let us see

that religion has this much to do with the State, that it shall make ourselves all the time the true defenders of regulated liberty and order against all assailants and show that the democracy of the church is a nursery of wise and generous liberalism. Let us show by our devotion to education that we are not unworthy sons of worthy sires.''[26] Angell's concern for liberty, order, democracy, liberalism and education seem Christian enough. However, what is missing from his list, from a more traditional perspective, is any intellectual defense for a faith system where scripture is inspired and authoritative. His apparent lack of concern for the central role of Scripture in the Christian life, a *sine qua non* of traditional Protestants, place him further into the liberal Protestant camp.

Nineteenth century liberal Protestantism generally entailed three sets of ideas: ''the adaptation of religious ideas to contemporary intellectual developments, the immanence of God in nature and human history, and correspondingly, the belief that society was slowly moving toward the realization of the kingdom of God.''[27] The overwhelming spirit of liberal Protestantism was that of openness and optimism. Science and technological advances would eventually (soon, it was hoped by millenialists as the century drew to a close) bring about the kingdom of God, and in the meantime, out-dated, unnecessary dogma (such as traditional understanding of revelation, redemption, or retribution) could be easily modified according to the findings of modern science.[28] Adherents to the liberal Protestant outlook saw the university as a vehicle for progress, an unquestionably

valuable and good progress. In viewing the university and its educational mission with such confident expectation, ''Protestant champions of liberal culture sacralized, not secularized, the modern university curriculum.''[29]

This sacralization of the curriculum was an outgrowth of attempts by liberal Protestants and agnostics alike to replace the lost unity previously provided by a curriculum centered on the course in Moral Philosophy. James Turner describes Charles Eliot Norton of Harvard as the dominant preacher of this new ''religion'' of beauty. Norton, an agnostic professor in the History of Art, replaced the lost intellectual unity with a common moral purpose, that of appreciating beauty. Arriving on the scene in the 1870s, at the time when religious services would soon become voluntary, and when the influence of religion in the curriculum was inconspicuously sliding to the periphery, Norton was able to introduce artistic appreciation to a ready following within the academic community. Infusing the new disciplines with this sense of aesthetic beauty led to the sacralization of the secular curriculum. In short, instead of placing value on courses for their religious content, liberal Protestants, a group whose loose standards allowed even sworn skeptics like Norton to claim membership, began to value courses for their contribution to a sense of liberalism, or their humanistic inspiration.[30]

Angell's place within this framework is unquestionable. In his baccalaureate address in the year of his retirement, 1909, Angell waxed eloquent:

> The world has at last reached a point where most men see that one becomes a faithful disciple of our Lord not so much by the recital of ancient formularies of theological doctrine as by showing the spirit of loyalty to the loving Father in the spirit of love towards his children whom our Lord came to save from suffering and sin. If an education is good for anything, it is because it equips us for helping our brethren to purer and happier living, and inspires us to cherish the best ideals for discharging that duty. He who has said that He will draw all men to himself is more and more inspiring his children to an unselfish activity, which is expressing itself in legislation, in missions, in charities, in a thousand organizations of public beneficence.[31]

Here again Angell revealed his emphasis on ''noble deeds,'' and his distaste for ''ancient formularies of theological doctrine,'' demonstrating his ready acceptance of the tenets of the liberal Protestantism of his day.

This impulse was reiterated in an address given at a Congregational Convention in 1907, toward the close of his career. Angell said, ''So the teacher must in practice begin with the nurture of ethical growth in his pupil while stimulating him in all proper ways to that highest moral development, to which some would apply the distinctive name of spiritual. But I sympathize with that growing tendency in our churches to aim at bringing the young to pure, noble, even devout conduct of life

rather than to the mastery of profound theological doctrines. Secular education must at any rate limit itself to that aim as its primary moral aspiration…''[32] ''Devout conduct of life'' was the highest goal of a secular education such as that to be obtained at the University of Michigan.

All this makes understanding Angell's intentionality in identifying the University as specifically ''Christian'' problematic. Was he merely expounding vague notions of a broadly good institution designed to alleviate some of the world's problems? Victor Wilbee's extensive work on Angell's religious dimension is illuminating here. His assertion is that rather than intending to break down religious orthodoxy at Michigan, Angell himself saw his work as building it up. Wilbee documents an incident where W. B. Williams was offered a position in public relations at Albion College, a small private religious college not far from Ann Arbor. Williams was hesitant to take the position if he felt that the College was unnecessary, that is, if the University was properly meeting the religious needs of the Christian students in Michigan. After a visit to the campus of the University, Williams determined that the University was *not* meeting these religious needs, and he took the job at Albion. In a subsequent report, he charged that the University was not appropriate for Christian students, citing the fact that Christian truths were not taught in the classes, and that compulsory chapel had been discontinued for reasons of incompatibility at a state university. Angell responded to Williams' charges by explaining that indeed ''Christian evidences

had always been taught at the university, that chapel had been made voluntary because of religious and philosophical convictions not because the university was a state institution, and he drew attention to numerous positive religious influences.''[33] Angell's very interest in responding here, whether genuine or not, is noteworthy.

Indeed, this was Angell's pattern. He was convinced of the Christian nature of the University of Michigan, and of the appropriateness of that Christianity. It seems, then, that his intention was undoubtedly to advance the cause of Christianity, at least his particular brand of liberal-Protestant Christianity, on campus in the lives of the students and faculty. The nature of this Christianity may have shifted during the nearly forty years he spent as the dearly loved ''Prexy''[34] of the University of Michigan, but, as evidenced by the continual rhetoric well into his retirement years, his desire that it grow never waned.

Religion: A Christian State University?

President Angell officially began his duties as the new president in September of 1871, but he made an important visit to set the stage and give his inaugural address during the commencement activities in June of that year. In his inaugural Angell set forth his agenda, explicitly defining the University as not only a religious institution, but also Christian. He proclaimed: ''The Christian spirit, which pervades the laws, the customs, and the life of the State, shall shape and color the life of the University, that a lofty, earnest, but catholic and

unsectarian Christian tone shall characterize the culture which is here imparted.''[35] Angell was convinced of the presence of not only a Christian University, but also a Christian State. As we shall see, a majority of members of the Michigan Legislature did not disagree.

The constitutionality of this claim, however, was challenged in 1873 by a Detroit businessman, Stephen McCracken. McCracken charged that the legislature was ignoring the fact that the State of Michigan comprised people from other religions besides Protestant Christianity. In his 1967 thesis on religion at the University, Victor Wilbee reports this as a climax to a series of public criticisms levied against the University dating back to the Tappan presidency. As plaintiff, McCracken ''strongly opposed Angell's referring to the State as Christian,'' pointing out the ''growing number of Jews, Spiritualists, Free Religionists, Materialists and Free Thinkers in the state and [he] accused the university of a 'puritan sectarianism' which regarded everything outside Protestant Christianity as sectarian.''[36] McCracken argued to the Legislature that an institution was sectarian if it was exclusively committed to one religious system, in this case, Christianity. Angell, however, had a different, more narrow interpretation of the term, limiting its meaning to differences between sects or denominations within Christianity more broadly. McCracken was interested in defending the separation of church and state, while Angell was deliberately and thoughtfully expounding the notion that a Protestant State,

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and thereby University, were merely byproducts of the wishes of a vast majority of Protestant citizens.

Wilbee has provided us with a detailed report of the 1873 Senate investigation and the testimony of Angell and several faculty members and Regents. The gist of the Senate's findings is summarized in the following:

> The teachings of the university are those of a liberal and enlightened Christianity, in the general, highest and best use of the term. This is not in our opinion sectarian. If it is, we would not have it changed. A school, a society, a nation devoid of Christianity, is not a pleasant spectacle to contemplate. We cannot believe the people of Michigan would denude this great university of its fair, liberal and honorable Christian character as it exists today.[37]

The Senate concluded that of course the University and the State of Michigan were Christian, that was not at issue. At issue was whether the University was forcing its beliefs on students, or discriminating based on religion, within an assumed Protestant establishment. This milieu and Angell's place directly in the center of it helps us to understand his role and influence on the religious life of the University at the onset of his presidency.

In the context of a nonsectarian, liberally-Protestant, Christian society, Angell was clearly involved in decision making at high levels. His testimony, rather than that of Stephen McCracken, was considered the better argument. Angell's faculty and Regents lined up behind him in affirming his definition of

sectarian, and denying that the University was or ever had been the exclusive domain of any one denomination. His role, then, was clearly influential, even though the agreement between Angell and his faculty on this issue makes his influence difficult to measure. His intentionality in this case is more obscure. Obviously, he felt that the State and the University were appropriately ''Christian'' in nature. What he meant by the term, however, is another question entirely. Placing him within the context of late nineteenth century liberal-Protestant American academe provides us with evidence that he intended something quite broad and inclusive.

Morality: Voluntary Chapel as an Aid to Piety

One of Angell's first tasks as president was to rein in the rampant disorderly conduct on campus, particularly during the required morning chapel services. Angell proved himself both decisive and visionary; within a year of his arrival, chapel was no longer compulsory. Angell's rigorous defense of this decision as good for the spiritual life of the students provides yet another look at his agency, specifically regarding morality and its place in the university setting.

Reflecting in his annual report in 1891 on his first twenty years of service as president, Angell summed up the significant events and achievements of the two decades. He wrote of the growth in the number of faculty, students, courses offered, the introduction of the seminar method borrowed from Germany, and then the following: ''It is perhaps worthy of mention that in

the middle of the year 1871-72 we substituted voluntary for compulsory attendance on the service of prayer in the chapel. We have seen no reason to doubt that the change was wise. The attendance, if sometimes not as great as could be desired, is always of those who with reverent spirit make the service a genuine communion with God and a means of devout refreshing of the soul. Several institutions have imitated our example and made attendance upon prayers voluntary.''[38] In an address to the University of Nebraska, he touched on the issue of compulsory attendance at chapel: ''in my opinion the compulsory attendance on such services of students [as chapel] as old as those usually found in our state universities is of very questionable spiritual benefit''.[39]

As mentioned above, counter to what one might expect, Angell explains the decision to make chapel voluntary in terms describing it as much improved, rather than unnecessary. If students were not interested, particularly students who were on average older than twenty years of age, Angell determined that it was better not to require them to attend prayers. The change in policy would allow those who were genuinely interested in prayers to worship undistracted, and those not so inclined, to choose differently.

In an interesting decision in 1877, Angell was asked to speak to the United States Evangelical Alliance in Detroit. He was invited to address the Alliance on the topic ''The Relations of our Higher Institutions of Learning to Christianity,'' but he chose instead to modify the topic to simply include colleges,

leaving out universities. In this address, he spoke at some length about the moral strength of colleges in general, and in trademark fashion, he spent time dispelling what he perceived to be untruths regarding the spiritual nature of the colleges. He stated:

> Some persons seem inclined to think that there has been a decline in the religious earnestness of faculties and governing bodies of Colleges, because there has been a change in certain usages. Whereas, chapel services used to be held twice a day, they are now observed only once, and that single service, instead of being held by lamp-light in the morning, when attendance upon it cultivated so many laudable habits and self-denying virtues, is appointed at some after-breakfast hour, or perhaps at an afternoon hour, when the most self-indulgent sybarite can easily be present. Attendance upon only one divine service on Sunday is required, and at some institutions where the average age of the students is twenty or twenty-one years - an age at which few judicious parents would deem it wise to compel the attendance of their sons on church, faculties are not very strict about enforcing the rules of attendance. In some institutions they even venture to believe, that if a young man of twenty one does not incline to go to church, it may be of doubtful expediency to compel him to go, and content themselves with encouraging attendance by all proper

means, and especially by furnishing some attractive preaching.[40]

Instead of complaining that colleges were headed in the wrong direction based on the lessening of the strict conditions under which students were required to worship and attend prayers, Angell suggested that colleges supply more interesting speakers that might draw students into interest rather than forcing them. Once again, though, his focus was not on disparaging the effects of worship, or the provision of opportunities for spiritual growth; rather he aimed his criticism at what he deemed ineffective means of bringing such growth about in the lives of students.

Because morality fits so nicely into a liberal Protestant framework, determining his influence and intentions regarding it are somewhat less difficult. These few citations provide evidence that Angell felt like chapel was so important that it merited being attended only by those of a proper spirit. His influence at Michigan was clear - within a year of his arrival, chapel services were no longer compulsory for any student. His intentionality in this decision is to provide a more rich worship and prayer experience for those students to whom it would be meaningful.

Knowledge: Birth of a Graduate School

After many years of awarding ad hoc post-baccalaureate degrees, the Graduate School was formally begun at Michigan during Angell's administration, in 1891. Although it would be

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another 40 years before the unprecedented Rackham family bequest established the Graduate School as it is recognized today, Angell's role in the organization of this project at Michigan provides evidence toward understanding where he placed religion, or faith, in relation to the academic nature of the university. It also sheds some light into how prominent his opinions in this area were.

James Turner and Paul Bernard assert a strong opinion regarding Angell's influence in this establishment of graduate education at Michigan. They paint Angell as a masterful administrator, but as largely benign in the development of graduate education. Credit for graduate education at Michigan, according to Turner and Bernard, belongs to Henry Frieze and Charles Kendall Adams, two of Angell's most powerful and German-influenced faculty members. Evidence for this opinion, however, appears slim. Turner and Bernard cite the fact that Frieze and Adams developed the University System out of a new School of Political Science during Angell's leave of absence to China in 1880-81, while Frieze was Acting President. Yet the faculty did not endorse the plan until after Angell had returned from China in the spring of 1882, in full support of it. [41]

Another item for consideration in the question regarding Angell's influence is the fact that he was a skillful diplomat and Professor of International Law, in addition to his other broad intellectual interests. It seems implausible that a reform-minded President with such a wide control over so many areas of his University would watch from the sidelines while two

faculty members, one of whom he had known for over thirty years, instituted a controversial progressive program in his own area of expertise into the University.

Whatever the case, the School of Political Science never fully made it off the ground as a prototype for American graduate training in the German tradition. Instead, the University continued to grant degrees to post-baccalaureate students in a haphazard fashion, until in the early 1890's, Angell reported to the Board of Regents the need for a more formal organization to give the increasing number of graduate students (ninety-five in 1890-91) the requisite attention. He urged in 1891 the formation of a faculty committee from the Literary Department to look into the matter, and report back to the Regents at a future date. One concern was that the current faculty members were stretched to their limits in balancing the teaching of undergraduates, and personal training and mentoring to the graduate students, who would undoubtedly "go hence to fill chairs of instruction in schools, seminaries, colleges and universities."[42]

Angell returned to the subject in his 1892 report, apparently presenting the findings of the Literary Faculty to the Regents. The strong message given by Angell in this Report was that it was time to take graduate education seriously. "We have reached so critical a point in our history, it is so obvious that we must now either accept a position in the rear of the larger universities with which we have long been keeping pace in the highest university work, or else make a vigorous forward movement..."[43] The Report emphasized the importance of graduate

work in the development of future college and university faculty, as well as the fact that this was, indeed, a realization of the vision of Henry Tappan regarding the real work of a genuine university. He was not naïve about the costs, however, and called for an increase in teaching assistants, books, and other apparatus necessary in advanced research.

In the Report of 1893, Angell again revisited the issue, this time with some news of the effects of the Board's positive responses to his earlier requests for funding. He touted the success of the new program in terms of its ability to better prepare students to make "positive contribution[s] to scholarship or to scientific knowledge." He also was impressed by the idea of providing models of scholarship to the undergraduates as well as service to the university; stating that "if we can attract and teach a large body of gifted and aspiring graduate students, their presence will have a strong lifting and inspiring influence on the undergraduates, and their achievements in various spheres of intellectual activity after they leave us will be of immense service to the University."[44] Angell's liberal Protestantism affected his outlook on the formation of the Graduate School because of the potential in graduate study to further the social progress already being made. Good scholarship, especially that which led to practical benefit to society, was as good a reason as Angell needed to support the endeavor.

Also mentioned in the 1893 report is the strong interest, both locally and nationally in Biblical Literature. This was an

area that the University had decided it would not enter on a formal basis, but Angell lauded the work of the Student Christian Association (SCA) and their program of Biblical Institutes. The Biblical Institutes were a series of voluntary lectures given on various Biblical themes by Michigan professors as well as visiting lecturers. The SCA was a large and popular student group on campus, the forerunner of the better-known YMCA and YWCA. The group's mission over time (it was founded in 1858) was broad, including everything from student Bible studies to the eventual development of several student services functions such as welcoming new students and hosting socials.

Here is where we see Angell's intentionality in regard to specific theological study as it relates to the university curriculum. As important as it was to him, he saw it as a peripheral academic pursuit that the University of Michigan had to associate with very carefully. He stated, "We cannot have a theological department. But if the guilds or other societies assemble theological studies here for instruction, we may, with propriety, and with satisfaction, receive such students to our classes." [45]

Seen as an either/or proposition, Angell's intentions regarding graduate education as it related to religious influence sent a mixed message. On one hand, the Graduate School would be a positive force for social growth and the spread of progress in society, and this was a good thing, and a religious expression for Angell's liberal Protestantism. On the other hand, theology could not be one of the subjects taught formally at Michigan, and

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this makes him suspect in terms of his advocacy for a Protestant influence in the academy. It seems evident enough that he was a proponent of his liberal Protestant ideology within the University, albeit not in any place of authority or in any part of the formal curriculum. This in itself is instructive of the fact that to Angell, the desired effect of Christianity on the University community was to be from the periphery, or the extra-curricular.

Conclusion

James B. Angell's devout and personal adherence to the dominant Protestant culture of his day, liberalism, provided him with a tremendous faith in the goodness of society, particularly those faculty members with whom he surrounded himself in hopes of providing the best education possible for his students. His unwavering belief in the desire and ability of Christian faculty to infuse their disciplines with their Christian faith did not foresee the eventual transition to a faculty whose personal faith systems were not orthodox or urgent, until it was too late to do anything meaningful about it. To this end, over the course of his extended presidency, his agency in secularization encompassed an organic combination of intentionality, inadvertence, *and* inevitability as time marched on and society and the academy changed.

The development of this succession appears to have gone something like this. When he arrived in Ann Arbor in 1871, he was young, intelligent, highly regarded and experienced, well

connected, and wholly committed to the ideals of a liberal Protestantism that promised to unite the world of his religiously academic youth with the world of his scientifically academic future. Social progress seemed a lofty, but attainable goal, and the influence of the fledgling state universities held much promise to be situated in the center of such progress. To this end, he came into his position as the president of the University of Michigan intending to bring about certain changes that were in keeping with a Christianity that he held to be "more true" than that of traditional Christians. This was intentional influence toward a nonsectarian university that resulted in a secularization that he did not predict or anticipate.

As the decades passed, and the new generations of faculty emerged from their graduate studies either in Germany or the nascent research universities in America, a wider divide developed between the optimistic and genteel notions of liberal Protestantism and the hard-line scientific movement that began to take its place. This trend worried Angell, but he did his best to marry the two ideologies, fearing the worst if cold, heartless scientists were to take over his beloved liberal system of education. These were years of his inadvertent allowance of secular ideas to gain footholds in positions of power within the academy while maintaining earlier commitments to keep overt religious voices out of any central discussions regarding what would drive the University at its center. By secularizing traditional religion, sacralizing the liberal arts, and acknowledging empirical science as authoritative by its very

nature, Angell and his contemporary liberal Protestant university builders established a virtual bedrock upon which secular empiricism could eventually hold ultimate sway with only occasional nods to the "spiritual" importance of the arts, humanities, and religion.

In his later years, from the turn of the twentieth century until his death in 1916, Angell seemed to realize the inescapable trend, and he began to wonder aloud about what had been wrought at his, and his contemporaries' hands. He began to see more clearly the power of the coming secularization, and lament the possibility that higher education without any values at its core might be not only unrecognizable, but also unworthy of respect. In a commencement address in 1902, he warned, "If all the munificent endowments, over which we are rejoicing, are to put an end to the good old days of 'plain living and high thinking,' and lead our ingenuous young men and young women to forget their pure and lofty and unselfish ideals, which have been the scholar's possession and inspiration, better, far better, that those endowments should have been sunk in the fathomless seas. If learning should catch the spirit of plutocracy and be wedded to greed, the intellectual and the social consequences would be most disastrous."[46] Angell left office in 1909, his final decade of speeches and addresses more openly concerned with the students' spiritual response to the call of the Master than earlier. He seemed to realize the inevitability of the coming secularization, and he was outspoken to the end for a strong, liberal, Christian influence in his beloved University.

James B. Angell's role in the secularization of the University of Michigan was a peculiar one. He played a middle ground in which he was perceived as irreligious by traditional, conservative Christians, and too pious and Christian for others, like Stephen McCracken in Detroit. As a member of a storied cohort of highly influential university builders, he held tremendous sway over the religious life of the University. But this influence could only go so far. During his tenure, the number of faculty over which he presided grew from just thirty-three in 1871 to over one-hundred in 1909, when he retired. Specialization increased among the disciplines as a result of an increasing Germanic influence tempered by American needs, and the student population grew from around 1,000 to over 5,000.[47] Much of Angell's time by the latter presidential years became tied up in administrative and fund raising activities.

The influence that he exerted over the University with respect to its relationship to religion was direct and purposeful. Angell's liberal Protestant belief system made every effort to marry religion with modern scholarship and science, but his belief system was party-line liberal-Protestant when choosing a dominant alliance: he (implicitly) chose empirical science every time. His influence in this respect was tremendous. Because he positioned himself in the center of the dominant faculty culture with respect to religion, refusing to cater to any one sect over another, and shunning theological dogma, Angell found little opposition to his bold decision-making and overtly Protestant bias.

He ended his distinguished career demonstrating a healthy blend of optimism in the spirit and potential of humanity, and lament for the increasing spirit of humanism. His 1905 baccalaureate discourse was telling in its subject matter. In the address, entitled ''The Old and the New Ideal of Scholars,'' Angell brought out the advantages and disadvantages of the competing views of scholarship; he set up the dialectic as ''culture'' versus ''research.'' Manifesting his role as a bridge between them, he thus hedged,

> ''As we review this brief inspection of the two types of scholarship and of two kinds of study, I think we shall agree that a proper combination of them is better than exclusive devotion to either alone. We should make ourselves familiar with the learning of the past not only for its charm, for its inspiring example of the fruits of patient toil, for its masterpieces of genius, but also because it furnishes the foundation on which to build in all our work of research.''[48]

Ever the academic politician, Angell maneuvered through a period of tremendous change, particularly in regard to the role of religion in the academy, with a trademark combination of a solid foundation in traditional classicism, and a healthy endorsement of progressive reforms.

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[1] William Ringenberg, *The Christian College: A History of Protestant Higher Education in America* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdman's, 1984) 84. Bradley Longfield sets a more accurate context by adding that this description may have

fit *most* of the public Midwestern universities of this era; in George Marsden and Bradley J. Longfield, *The Secularization of the Academy* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1992, 49.

[2] Some of this, of course, is due to the length of Angell's tenure, 38 years, but biographers of the University of Michigan history are in general agreement that Angell's faith was instrumental to him in his presidency. See Shirley W. Smith, *James Burrill Angell: An American Influence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1958), 338-49; Wilfred Shaw, "James Burrill Angel and the University of Michigan," *Michigan History Magazine, v. II, no. 2*, April, 1918, 16, 17; Howard H. Peckham, *The Making of the University of Michigan, 1817-1992* (edited and updated by Margaret L. Steneck, and Nicholas H. Steneck) (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992); Victor R. Wilbee, "The Religious Dimensions of Three Presidencies in a State University: Presidents Tappan, Haven, and Angell at the University of Michigan," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1967, 201-04. and George Marsden, *The Soul of the American University: From Protestant Establishment to Established Nonbelief* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 167-78.

[3] Among many others see especially Richard Hofstadter and C. DeWitt Hardy, *The Development and Scope of Higher Education in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1952); Frederick Rudolph, *The American College and University: A History* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1962); Laurence Veysey, *The Emergence of the American University* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1965); Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*; and Julie Reuben, *The Making of the Modern University: Intellectual Transformation and the Marginalization of Morality* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996).

[4] Hofstadter and Hardy, especially, seem to confuse secular and nonsectarian throughout their book. Universities were clearly nonsectarian by the early part of the twentieth century, but whether they were "secular" or not remains in dispute. See especially Kememy's treatment of Princeton, P. C. Kemeny, *Princeton in the Nation's Service: Religious Ideals and Educational Practice, 1868-1928* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

[5] A couple of notable exceptions include Victor Wilbee's unpublished dissertation, "Religious Dimensions," 156-215, and George Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 167-80.

[6] See James Turner & Paul Bernard, "The 'German Model' and the Graduate School: The University of Michigan and the Origin Myth of the American University." *History of Higher Education Annual*, v. 13, 1993, 69-97.

[7] See James B. Angell, "The Widening Horizon," Baccalaureate Address, University of Michigan, 1900; "The Old and New Ideal of Scholars" A Baccalaureate Discourse, University of Michigan, 1905; "The New Era in Higher Education," Baccalaureate Address, University of Michigan, 1902.

[8] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 156-59.

[9] See note 3.

[10] In this essay secularization will refer to the lessening of religious influence in higher education. For a general summary of its relationship to disestablishment, and a more thorough treatment of its use in recent literature, see Marsden and Longfield, *The Secularization of the Academy*, 4-7; and Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 6-7.

[11] D.G. Hart identifies four traditional accounts that were influential in the period between 1955 and 1976: Veysey, *Emergence*, 21-56; Richard Hofstadter and Walter P. Metzger, *The Development of Academic Freedom in the United States* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1955); John S Brubacher and Willis Rudy, *Higher Education in Transition* (New York: Harper and Row, 1976); Rudolph, *American College and University*. In D. G. Hart, "Christianity and the University in America: A Bibliographic Essay," in George Marsden and Bradley J. Longfield, *The Secularization of the Academy*, 303-09. Examples of revisionists emerging in the mid-1980's are: James Turner, *Without God, Without Creed: The Origins of Unbelief in America* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985), xiii; Marsden, *The Soul of the American University;* Reuben, *Modern University*; Kemeny, *Princeton in the Nation's Service*. These are just four more recent voices with perspectives that differ from the traditional view of how and why secularization or unbelief occurred.

[12] Ringenberg, *The Christian College*, 115.

[13] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 3-8, 156-9.

[14] I owe this idea to the generous reviews of Nicholas and Margaret Steneck, personal communication.

[15] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 312.

[16] Ibid., 8, 156-159; Reuben, *Modern University*, 13.

[17] James B. Angell, "The Relation of the American Colleges to Christianity," Paper read before the United States Evangelical Alliance, October 30-November 2, 1877 (Detroit); James B. Angell, "Christianity and Other Religions Judged by Their Fruits," (Ann Arbor, 1892); James B. Angell, *The Reminiscences of James Burrill Angell* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1911); James B. Angell, *Selected Addresses* (New York: Longmans, Green, and Co, 1912). The collection of James B. Angell Papers in the Bentley Historical Library at the University of Michigan is extensive; the works listed provide a small sampling of his related speeches.

[18] Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 8, 176-78.

[19] Reuben, *Modern University*, 13.

[20] Ibid., 14.

[21] In addition to the above-mentioned biographical sources, Angell's biography can be read in numerous histories of The University of Michigan, including: Kent Sagendorph, *Michigan: The Story of the University* (New York: E. P. Dutton & Co., Inc.); or in Angell's own work, *The Reminiscences of James Burrill Angell* (New York: Longman's Green, & Co., 1911).

[22] Angell, *Reminiscences*, 10,11.
[23] Francis Wayland, *Elements of Political Economy*, 2nd ed. (1852 [1837]), cited in Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 102, f. 3. Also, Wayland *The Elements of Moral Science*, rev. and improved ed. (New York, 1865), cited in Reuben, *Modern University*, 21.
[24] For a thorough discussion of the German ideal, and Wayland and Tappan's role in adapting it to American higher education, see Marsden, *The Soul of the American University*, 102-10.
[25] Angell, *Reminiscences*, 33, 4.
[26] James B. Angell, "The Permanent Elements of Puritanism," Angell Papers, Box 8, [323]. Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan. This address was apparently given again in 1883 to the Chicago Congregational Club at their Forefather's Day celebration.
[27] Kemeny, *Princeton in the Nation's Service*, 184.
[28] For a helpful treatment of liberal Protestantism and its ascendance, see Bradley J. Longfield, "From Evangelicalism to Liberalism: Public Midwestern Universities in Nineteenth Century America," in Marsden & Longfield, *Secularization of the Academy*, 46-73.
[29] Kemeny, *Princeton in the Nation's Service*, 150.
[30] James Turner, "Secularization and Sacralization: Speculations on some Religious Origins of the Secular Humanities Curriculum, 1850-1900," in Marsden & Longfield, *Secularization of the Academy*, 74-106.
[31] James B. Angell, "The State and the Student," Baccalaureate Address, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, 1909, 17.
[32] James B. Angell, "The Spiritual Opportunities of Secular Education" Address given at the Convention of the Congregational Brotherhood, Detroit, 1907. Angell Papers, Bentley Historical Library, Box 10, [458].
[33] Letters, H. L. Butterfield, President of Albion, to Angell, May 10, 1880; W. B. Williams to Angell, May 15, 1880; Angell to W. B. Williams, May 17, 1880. Angell Papers. All quoted in Wilbee, *Religious Dimensions*, 199.
[34] "Prexy" was a common term of endearment attached to nineteenth century college presidents.
[35] James B. Angell, "Inaugural Address" in *Selected Addresses, 29.*
[36] Victor R. Wilbee, "*The Religious Dimensions of Three Presidencies*," 201-04.
[37] Michigan Legislature, Legislative Journal, Daily Proceedings (Lansing, 1873), p. 1780. Quoted in Wilbee, *The Religious Dimensions of Three Presidencies*, p. 203.
[38] "President's Report", in the *Proceedings of the Board of Regents*, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, October 21, 1891.
[39] James B. Angell, "State Universities: Their Difficulties, Their Advantages, Their Needs." Address given at the University of Nebraska's twentieth anniversary, February 15, 1889. Angell Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, newspaper clipping, Box 9, [370].
[40] James B. Angell, "The Relation of the American Colleges to Christianity." A paper read before the United States Evangelical Alliance at the conference held at Detroit, Oct. 30 – Nov. 2, 1877, 68. Angell Papers, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.
[41] Turner & Bernard, "The 'German Model' and the Graduate School," 69-97.
[42] "President's Report," 1891, 562-63.
[43] "President's Report," 1892, 80.
[44] "President's Report," 1893, 195.
[45] Ibid., 197.
[46] James B. Angell, "The New Era in Higher Education", Baccalaureate Address, University Hall, June 15, 1902.
[47] Peckham, *The Making of the University of Michigan*, 77-8, 112, 123.
[48] James B. Angell, "The Old and New Ideal of Scholars," 10.

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